

CYPRAEA LEUCODON BRODERIP,
RAREST SHELL?

By RICHARD I. JOHNSON

For many years, through many editions, Guinness' *Book of World Records*, has listed *Cypraea leucodon* Broderip as the rarest shell. Burgess (1970: 252) pointed out that in addition to the holotype in the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) and the specimen in the Museum of Comparative Zoology (38370) a third specimen was taken in 1965 from the stomach of a fish caught in the Sulu Sea off the Philippine Islands. He further noted that both *Cypraea katsuae* Kuroda and *barclayi* Reeve are each known from single specimens. Thus in the single genus *Cypraea*, there are at least two species more rare than *leucodon*.

The 1974 edition of the Record Book no longer figures the holotype of *leucodon*, and duly notes that there are three specimens of it, but continues to regard it as the rarest shell. Obviously, there is no single rarest shell, but if one is needed to settle heated altercations in pubs, bars, and elsewhere, it might just as well be *Cypraea leucodon* that contributes to tranquility.

REFERENCES

- BRODERIP, W. J. 1828. *Zoological Journal* 4: 163. pl. 5. [Original description].
- BURGESS, C. M. 1970. *The Living Cowries*. A. S. Barnes & Co. Cranbury, New Jersey, pp. 252-253. pl. 28, figs. A, A1, [Holotype refigured].
- GUINNESS. 1974. *Book of World Records*, by N. and R. McWhirter. Bantam Books, Inc. New York, p. 100.

Note: The specimen of *C. leucodon* in the Museum of Comparative Zoology is now portrayed in color on a postcard, and is available at this writing from the Museum Shop, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. 02138, at 10¢ each, postage extra.